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EDITORIAL: It has come to our attention that unscrupulous black marketeers have been retailing copies of CHEAP TRUTH at astronomical prices, some going as high as twelve to thirteen cents. The situation is especially bad in Eastern Bloc countries, where the CHEAP TRUTH distribution network has been penetrated by KGB and Bulgarian agents provocateurs, who take advantage of desperate shortages of SF criticism to hike the underground price from one American cigarette to as high as two or even three. We suggest therefore that readers who cannot get pirated copies write directly to the CHEAP TRUTH offices, sending a dollar, or the equivalent in local postage, with their address and nom de guerre. New issues will be forthcoming.

On a more serious note, we suggest a $25 subscription to SAMIZDAT BULLETIN, C/O Ms. Olga Stacevich, P. O. Box 6128, San Mateo, California 94403.

BARRINGTON BAYLEY RETROSPECTIVE

Justice must be done for Barrington J. Bayley. His manifest virtues cry out for vindication. Bayley has been neglected too long. Despite his steady production, he is best known in America, when known at all, for his ten-year-old work in NEW WORLDS.

The legacy of those days (THE KNIGHTS OF THE LIMITS, Barrington Bayley, Fontana-Collins, £ .95) makes astonishing reading. It reminds one that the power of British New Wave was not due to its decalcifying treatment of sex or the fact that much of its readership was stoned. Those ephemera blew away with the hash fumes over Ladbroke Grove. What is left is sheer visionary intensity, which Bayley has always had and displays today even more vigorously.

"The Ur-Plant" is Bayley's latest story, in INTERZONE, which is NEW WORLDS' successor in British SF's valiant struggle for Arts Council grants. Bayley's story stands out in this somewhat precious magazine like a cactus among balloons.

Bayley writes science fiction with the natural fluency of a man who can't help it. He has the ineffable, unfakeable genius of a true SF visionary: of Wells, Stapledon, and Ballard; of Bester, Dick, and Farmer.

Small things do not content this man. He is tooling along in second gear if he does not blow your mind ten times in eighteen pages. He is at home re-inventing the nature of space-time, stretching the limits of consciousness, reassembling reality. He leaps past the jugular and deep into the frontal lobes.

Bayley is the Zen master of modern space opera. He has the wild power of E. E. Smith, without Smith's pathetic illiteracy or gross provincialism. The magazines of the '30's might have been titled to describe Bayley's work: Amazing, Startling, Fantastic, Weird. This tie to traditionalism may explain why his novels have been published by DAW: THE PILLARS OF ETERNITY, THE FALL OF CHRONOPOLIS, THE GRAND WHEEL, STAR WINDS, THE GARMENTS OF CAEAN, COLLISION COURSE.

Yet Bayley's elemental energy, his mastery of the sense of wonder, cannot be denied. His work is the very antithesis of tired hackdom. To invent an entire self-consistent cosmology and physics for a $2.50 DAW paperback (THE ZEN GUN, 1983) is one of those noble acts of selfless altruism that keep SF alive. There seems no limit to the man's inventiveness, his pyrotechnic bursts of fresh ideas. To these natural gifts, enough to sustain a dozen lesser writers, he adds an intense dedication to craft that gives his best work its eerie sense of dark complexity. To read a work like "The Cabinet of Oliver Naylor" is to be simultaneously enlightened and bewildered, to receive a Zen knock on the head; it is the literary equivalent of psilocybin. It is, in fact, why science fiction was invented.

It was not a historical accident that science fiction first entered mass consciousness in a welter of garish colors and howling verbal excess. SF is the enemy of normality, the antidote to bored sophistication and know-it-all over-refinement. If SF, in outgrowing its native vulgarity, also loses its ability to stun, it will have sold its birthright for a mess of pottage. At this point SF can commit any literary crime but boredom; any crime, that is, except the one that is now killing the mainstream. In all respects, Barrington Bayley's hands are clean.

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Vincent Omniaveritas, editing. Todd Refinery, graphics.
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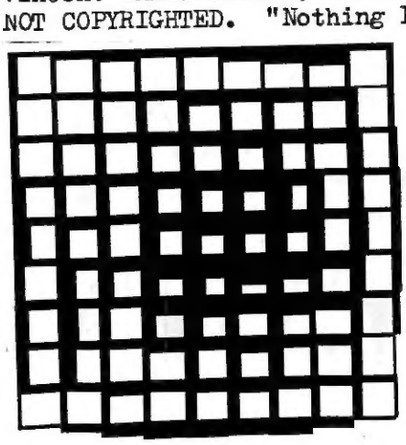

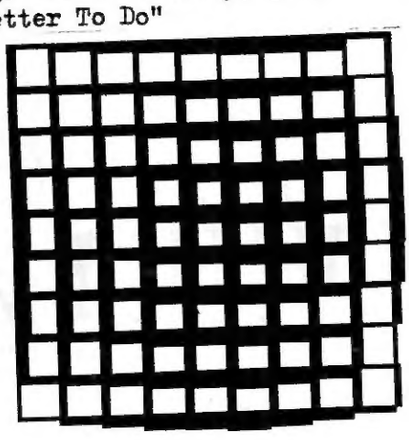

Lady Augusta Ada Byron (Countess Lovelace), considered the first computer programmer because of her work on the analytical engine developed by Babbage in the early 1800s.

INTERVIEW WITH THE MARTYR

We got hold of H. P. Lovecraft. Never mind how. There are things in the Cross Plains Dairy Queen that are best left unspoken. At any rate we had the gentleman in the CHEAP TRUTH offices in late March, 1983 -- some 46 years after his death. Lovecraft was dressed in a cruddy-looking black wrinkled suit with a skinny tie and celluloid collar. His nose was sunburned. He looked rather pasty and gaunt -- we had called him up from about 1935, when his diet of graham crackers and canned spaghetti was definitely beginning to kill him.

CT: Mr. Lovecraft -- may we call you Eich-Pi-El? -- this is a great pleasure. Please, just toss the cat out of the chair, there, and have a seat.
HPL: I wouldn't dream of disturbing puss. He's a fine, swart beast, isn't he? (Spectrally) The cat is cousin to the Sphynx, but remembers secrets she has long forgotten.
CT: Far out. Can I get you anything? A beer, maybe?
HPL: Liquor has never passed my lips.
CT: Some coffee?
HPL: That would be splendid. With five sugars, please. (sips) Very good. This costs five cents a cup, you know. Quite a sum when you're living on seventeen cents a day. I made quite a science out of poverty, in my last days. But I was never a -- <u>businessman</u>. You can't make a businessman out of a corpse.
CT: Please, have all you like. The Cheap Truth publishing empire covers the globe. That's one of the reasons we called you up, Eich-Pi-El. You are, after all, the paragon -- the very archetype of the starving science fiction writer. Were you aware that your premature death would set the model for an entire lifestyle?
HPL: Actually, now. I died with the firm conviction that my work would be completely eclipsed, swept out with the rest of the illiterate pulp trash. I knew what was good, you see. I read Proust, Willa Cather, Theodore Dreiser. I knew what was good, and what was cheap garbage.
CT: And yet you died in pursuit of your art.
HPL: (shrugs) At that point it really didn't matter much. I had reached the culmination of my philosophy -- what I called psychological self-annihilation. I saw things from a cosmic perspective. The tragedy of one atom -- even if it was myself -- was simply irrelevant.
CT: Destroy desire and you destroy unhappiness, is that it?
HPL: Exactly.
CT: But that's Buddhism. Classic Buddhist enlightenment, in fact. All that ascetic discipline of yours --
HPL: (bristles) What? The spineless fatalism of the Hindu? I'm the scion of blue-eyed Nordic conquerors.
CT: (uncomfortably) OK, that's cool. Is it true that you and Clark Ashton Smith used to call Hugo Gernsback "Hugo the Rat"?
HPL: Yes. But we never hated him as much as we despised that crawling horror, Farnsworth Wright. He starved us, cheated us. He rejected my best work. He made his magazine into a pigsty for cheap scribblers. My stories appeared cheek by jowl with truss ads. Was it any wonder that I began to write letters instead? (Begins to talk faster and faster) At first dozens, then hundreds, and at last a steady stream of them -- that instead of publishing I wrote everything in longhand? Each time, for an audience of one. A writer <u>must</u> speak, even if he has to pay for the privilege in postage and starvation.
CT: I understand perfectly, Mr. Lovecraft. May I say that I've always admired you? I suppose that your fiction <u>was</u> mostly garbage, but you are more than that -- you're an avatar, a symbol. I wonder how many young writers have found courage in your example. "After all, what's the worst thing that can happen to me if I write SF? At worst, I'll simply die a slow, miserable death by inches like H. P. Lovecraft." You never compromised -- you stayed shabby-genteel to the end, and died without ever doing one single practical thing. Your rejection of the world was total. It was the act of a saint.
HPL: Are you Jewish?
CT: (startled) No. Thanks for coming, Mr. Lovecraft.
HPL: You have a funny swarthy look about you. I can tell you're a dago of some kind. "Omniaveritas" -- what kind of name is that? Not Anglo-Saxon. Let me see the shape of your head -- (He suddenly fades away. He is, after all, dead.)